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Insider named to head the CIA

By Rae Tyson
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Though Robert Gates is assuming the CIA directorship at a time of turmoil, many see a smooth transition following the resignation of William Casey.

The agency's current dilemma: A Senate committee has questioned the legality of its role in the sale of arms to Iran.

President Reagan says Gates, 43, a 20-year CIA veteran, will be able to "put the agency back on course."

The resignation "was Casey's idea," said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater, adding that Reagan accepted the resignation of his friend and adviser "with reluctance and deep regret."

Fitzwater said Casey, 73 — recovering from removal of a brain tumor in December — is "alert and he can talk."

While lawmakers expressed approval, Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., said he is concerned Gates may have delayed alerting Congress to possible CIA wrongdoing in the Iran affair.

Some lawmakers said Gates' confirmation hearings could become a forum for exposing the CIA's role in the affair.

But, Gates ultimately is ex-

pected to improve relations with Congress, which suffered with Casey's penchant for covert operations. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman David Boren, D-Okla., says Gates shares a common goal of establishing "mutual trust."

CIA employees, seemed relieved by Gates' appointment. Others — including former Sens. Howard Baker and John

Tower — were rumored to be in line for the post.

An outsider would "have to spend six months learning where the bathroom is at the same time the CIA is being turned upside down by the congressional investigations," an agency employee told The Associated Press.

"It takes it away from the political arena; it allows a profes-

sional to take over under adverse conditions," said John Greaney, executive director of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers.

Gates lacks Casey's strongest asset: close ties to Reagan.

But, says Bobby Ray Inman, who preceded Gates as deputy CIA director: "In the last two years of an administration you need expertise, not closeness."